

Method for Utilizing Excess Communications Capacity

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

Methods and apparatus for the secure and copy-proof distribution of data are disclosed. In a preferred embodiment of the invention, a network of satellites in low Earth orbit are used to convey packets of data from ground stations to set-top boxes installed in residences. The data is conveyed from the ground stations and to the set-top boxes during times when the network capacity is not fully utilized. In one embodiment, the packets of data which are transmitted from the ground stations to the satellites, and then to the subscribers, are heavily encrypted. In one embodiment, this data is always confined to the secure network, and is never introduced to the Internet or other public networks. The data conveyed by the present invention may be video or audio programming, business data, or any other type of information. Upon arrival at the subscriber's premises, the received signals may be decrypted, but are not capable of being copied, since the receiver does not include any external disc or tapes drives or output ports.

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